DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 367 597 SP 035 008

AUTHOR Taylor, Nancy E.; And Others
TITLE Making Connections: Aligning Theory and Field Practice.
PUB DATE Feb 94
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (Chicago, IL, February 16-19, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Juniors; Conceptual Tempo; Elementary Education; Experiential Learning; Higher Education; Methods Courses; *Practicums; *Preservice Teacher Education; *Program Development; *Program Effectiveness; *Student Teaching; Teacher Education Programs; Thematic Approach; *Theory Practice Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Catholic University of America DC

ABSTRACT

This paper reports program changes in the junior year internship that were made to bring practice closer to the theoretical goals of the Catholic University of America's teacher education program in Washington, D.C. The changes had the goal of increasing the quality and scope of education students' thinking about education, and they involved restructuring the organization of course work so students could spend a concentrated amount of time in classrooms. Juniors spent 1 day a week in field placement during their first semester. The second semester then consisted of the major methods courses (taught at the field site) and a practicum of 2 mornings a week during the first half of the semester and four consecutive days during the second half of the semester. Students planned and carried out a thematic unit that integrated science, social studies, and reading/language arts. This activity pulled the methods courses and the field experience together. Reflection about practice was encouraged throughout the semester. Data from 13 preservice teachers revealed that the revised program was effective in accomplishing its goals. Students practiced reflection not imitation, found support not isolation, connected theory and activity for transfer, and experienced normatively situated dilemmas instead of only technique. Themes emerging from the evaluation data include: ownership/partnership; risk taking; planning, teaching, and learning; realities; and relationship of changes to larger program goals. (Contains 18 references.) (JDD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

DRAFT: Do not cite without authors' permission.

ED 367 597

Making Connections: Aligning Theory and Field Practice

Nancy E. Taylor

Anastasia P. Samaras

The Catholic University of America

Anne Gay

Janney Elementary School, District of Columbia Public Schools

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

A. Samaras

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of American Colleges for Teacher Education, Chicago, Illinois, February, 1994.

Running head: Making Connections

SP035008

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Making Connections: Aligning Theory and Field Practice

Field or practicum experiences remain a problematic issue in teacher education. The push for field experiences connected to teacher education courses has increased while a body of literature has accumulated that documents the negative effects of ill conceived field experience on the learning outcomes that stem from university goals.

Goodman (1988), Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann (1985) and others point to teacher education students' prior beliefs and images of schooling as powerful filters that sometimes work against the potential benefits of field work to support, and make meaningful, principles set forth in course work. Feimnan-Nemser & Buchmann cite three pitfalls in field experience: 1) Familiarity, or the tendency to unquestionably trust that which is familiar from personal experience. 2) The two worlds pitfall, or the fact that goals and expectations of the university and the classroom are often different and at odds with each other. 3) The pitfall of cross purposes, the fact that classrooms are set up for teaching children rather than teachers and what is reinforced is adaptation to the here and now. These pitfalls tend to limit what is learned from experience. If these pitfalls are to be avoided, universities must recognize that learning about teaching from experience is not a straight forward process. Teacher education programs must be designed to assist students in their negotiation of meaning about teaching and learning. Zeichner (1990) points to the need for explicit practicum curriculum that would establish a strong link between course work and what teacher education students learn in schools.

It is clear that we cannot assume that simply being in the field will promote critical and reflective thinking about education, teaching and learning. The purpose of this paper is to report program changes in the junior year internship to bring practice closer to the theoretical goals that characterize our teacher education program.

Background

The program described in this paper is a reflective teacher education program at the Catholic University of America (CUA). It has been described as a deliberative program (Valli, 1990) although there is a strong tendency on the part of some faculty to work for transformative action. The program is based on four criteria deemed necessary for an effective reflective teacher education program. The curriculum:

1. incorporates reflection throughout the program.
2. incorporates an epistemology which is rigorous, critical and experienced based.
3. involves problems or issues which are normatively situated.
4. employs instructional strategies which progressively link knowledge with action.

(Valli & Taylor, 1987).

Reflective teacher education programs should have as a goal the broadening and deepening of students' thinking about teaching and learning. The program described in this paper has the specific goal of increasing the quality and scope of education students' thinking about education (Taylor & Valli, 1992).[1] Two years prior to the changes we describe, we began to seriously question the junior year field component as an educative experience for all students. Three major shortcomings were observed in the junior year professional development sequence:

1) The field component failed to support university course work. Originally the university faculty viewed the field experience as serving two purposes : a) allowing students to get a picture of the school day b) enabling students to try out lesson planning in content areas and strategies promoted in these courses. The one day a week practicum did not allow students to see the continuance of curriculum. It was difficult for teacher education students to get the big picture of the way curriculum experiences build upon each other. Because practicum experiences were designed to give students a variety of placements, these classroom contexts did not always reflect the type of instruction promoted in university course work. Students often felt caught between two competing demands. In some cases this led to resistance and rejection of elements embedded in university

course work.

2) These field constraints become more compelling as we started emphasizing integrated planning across the junior year course work. Rather than isolated assignments in separate courses we began to emphasize unit planning that linked assignments from all five methods courses. Students had to plan hypothetical units and try out only bits of them in the field, if they were lucky.

3) The dynamics that emerged made it difficult to encourage students to reflect on broader educational issues and many of the processes we used to foster reflection such as journaling were rejected as busy work. We felt we were working harder and harder to incorporate a rigorous and critical epistemology but the experienced-based part of the equation was working against us.

Program Changes

Two types of changes were made: Restructuring course work and restructuring field experiences. The purpose was to bring the two components into closer alignment in an attempt to maximize university influence on teacher education students' development. Prior to restructuring, students took different methods courses each semester but remained in a year long, one day a week practicum. Figure 1 illustrates the new arrangement.

The first major change involved restructuring the organization of course work so students could spend a concentrated amount of time in classrooms. To do this we reconceptualized the junior year experience as two professional semesters. The field experience in the first professional semester followed the former one day a week field placement. The second professional semester (the focus of this paper) consisted of the major methods courses and provided for a concentrated half day practicum that would allow teacher education students to experience a connected period of time in classrooms with children and their teachers. Providing for a concentrated practicum involved moving the Reading and Language Arts course to the field and concentrating it so that all instructional contact hours would be completed by mid-semester. Students spent two mornings a week with their cooperating teacher for the first half of the semester and four consecutive days with

the cooperating teacher in the second half. In the second half they planned and carried out a unit plan that integrated science, social studies, and reading/language arts around a theme agreed upon with their cooperating teacher. The rationale for locating at least one course in the field was twofold. Past experience indicated that students saw the university as one part of their life and their field placement as a separate unconnected experience. This created tensions of commitment that were difficult to deal with in ways that would lead to growth. Secondly, even though earlier field components were well supervised, the practicum faculty had little identity with the university faculty or the university goals. Relocation of courses to the field is an organizational means of increasing faculty and university course work visibility.[2]

There were two complimentary objectives which were deemed necessary in our efforts to restructure the junior practicum field experience; 1) a framework for better preparing those entering their student teaching experience to both understand how to plan instruction and reflect upon their efforts 2) and university involvement in professional renewal with teachers who work with our students. As part of this second effort the professor who taught the reading/language arts course also offered a 1 credit seminar to all teachers who wished to participate. This seminar met every other week and focused on constructing shared meaning of curriculum that would promote "teaching for understanding" (Gardner 1991); a focus shared with the methods classes.

The third major change was that unit planning became a theme that pulled the reading/language arts and social studies/science methods courses and the field experience together. Prior to the semester we negotiated the practicum with the teachers. We framed the negotiations in terms of problems we had noticed students having during student teaching. Since many cooperating teachers had observed similar problems, negotiations shared a common ground. Prior to the start of the practicum, teachers knew that students would have to plan and carry out a unit plan. Willingness to take a student was a commitment to allow the student to engage in this activity. The unit plan along with the concentrated amount of time in the classroom was designed to enable students to experience curriculum in action. Our primary goals in our university teaching were: 1)

to teach for major concepts, not isolated facts 2) to situate learning in context 3) to allow connections across the curriculum in context 4) to make dialogue the central medium for teaching, learning and personal theory building, and 5) to encourage reflection about practice.

The integrated unit plan linked the four courses student take during the second professional semester, but was the primary focus for two of the four courses: Social Studies and Science Methods and Reading and Language Arts. Faculty teaching these two methods courses planned together and modeled interdisciplinary teaching. They also negotiated the linkage of some assignments in the other two courses: Math Methods and Children's Literature. The unit plan is the major project of Social Studies and Science Methods. Information acquired during Reading and Language Arts must be demonstrated throughout the unit and students must design one text-based lesson in which one or more reading comprehension strategies are used to assist students in constructing meaning from text. The unit is not the major assignment for Reading and Language Arts, rather it provides a means in which students demonstrate their knowledge of course concepts and is evaluated on the basis of the degree to which these concepts have been integrated into the unit.

Children's Literature and Methods in Mathematics each link one assignment to the unit, but the unit itself is not the focus of evaluation in these courses. In Children's Literature, students compile an annotated bibliography of quality literature related to the unit topic. This assignment is graded independently of the unit, but students use this assignment to meet the unit requirement of 15-20 books that support the unit. In a similar fashion, one of three lesson plans required for Methods in Mathematics (one involving problem solving) is based on the unit theme and becomes part of the unit.

The unit is planned with the practicum teacher and flows naturally out of the ongoing classroom curriculum. It is taught in the last three weeks of the semester. Since teacher education students have been spending four mornings a week in their classroom they have a greater sense of student interest and needs and are able to use this information when they plan and carry out the unit.

Course activities, particularly those in Social Studies and Science Methods also reflect Vygotskian (1981) notions of socially shared cognition. Course activities were devised to connect the class dialogue and field implementation with a social, technical, and reflective support network. Peer-assisted, collaborative learning settings offered a shared space in which meaning was constructed (Newman, Griffin, & Cole, 1989). Students adopted a "partnership perspective" (Erdman, 1983) developing, discussing, experimenting, and reflecting on their lessons with peers and cooperating teachers. It was our thinking that teaching and learning in a constant community of discourse would serve not only metacognitive purposes but encourage and nourish cohort collegiality and bonds of support. It has been suggested that one of the major causes of educator burnout is the absence of a social support network. Support provided by co-workers was found a crucial factor of collegiality (Schwab, Jackson & Schuler, 1986). While opportunities for students to express conscious reflections and engage in the social construction of their lessons begins in their first professional semester it intensifies and becomes more connected in the second professional semester. During this semester students talked about planning interdisciplinary units to be implemented in the field. Students were expected to articulate the major concepts connected to and connected through their units. A major goal was to assist students in formulating conceptually-based, rather than activity-driven thematic units. As student teacher supervisors, we had observed that students perceived their webbing of thematic units as an array of activities in each content area. This misconception about planning fails to enhance schemata building in childrens' understanding of how the various disciplines connect and creates what Jacobs (1989) calls a potpourri problem in interdisciplinary design.

In class activities designed to overcome this problem included an author's chair activity where students talked about their unit concepts, etched out conceptual connections between reading, language arts, social studies and science content, and sought and evaluated the usefulness of peer suggestions. Other interactive projects that provided an audience and a dialgoue for understanding included: roundtables focusing on science background knowledge, sharing concept maps, peer

coaching, and poster sessions of units with self-evaluative comments of unit implementation.

Careful considerations were given to the contextual applicability of course assignments. Unit and field assignments were interwoven with course content. In addition, students were introduced to the rich resources that existed in the city that could enhance their teaching and unit planning[3].

Reflection about practice was encouraged through "quick writes" throughout the semester that allowed us to see what our students were thinking at different points of their field experience. A final progress report of what they learned from the second field experience was shared. A debriefing session (Raths, 1987) and class webbing of field experience connected to course work was held.

Results

In the spring semester of 1993, 13 preservice teachers became part of the restructured second professional junior year experience. There were 9 undergraduate, 2 graduate elementary education majors and 2 undergraduate early childhood majors. All students had met the standards and assessments for continuance in the university's teacher education program.

Five students were placed at an elementary parochial school and eight students were placed at an adjacently located urban public elementary school.[4] A university graduate student was assigned to observe students and teachers weekly, serve as a troubleshooter, and share observations with university faculty. Faculty visited and supported students in the field and taught the connecting methods courses.

We collected data over a four-month period (February, 1992-May, 1992). Our evaluation was guided by the desire to gather data on the effectiveness of the changes, to guide further revisions, and the desire to capture in depth our students' thinking about this educational experience. Data sources included student journals, responses to inclass "quick writes", the units students planned, pre and post concept maps, evaluations by their practicum teachers and university supervisor, students' self evaluations, a progress report of their practicum experience, audio-taped semi-

structured exit interviews with the principals of the two schools, the practicum teachers and the students themselves, and a video-taped debriefing session designed to capture the meaning students assigned to their practicum experience . Secondary data was collected through informal conversations and notes from the university supervisor, cooperating teachers. The results reported in this paper are drawn from student, teacher and principal exit interviews and students' written reflections on their experience.

Data supports the notion that the revised practicum and course work enabled us to better accomplish the goals of our teacher education program. Students practiced reflection not imitation; found support not isolation; connected theory and activity for transfer; and experienced normatively situated dilemmas instead of only technique.[5] The planning and delivery of the interdisciplinary unit project afforded multiple opportunities for students' situated learning and professional growth. Students could try out instructional and classroom management strategies learned in courses; work with children individually, in multicultural settings with heterogenous and multiple aged groupings; assess childrens' daily and cumulative work; and work with school staff, resource teachers, parents and community.

The following themes emerged from the student data and were supported in interview data from principals and teachers:

Ownership/Partnership

Students felt ownership and autonomy in planning and implementing lessons even though it was not always easy. They began to realize how much they knew and also how much they still had to learn. Cooperating teachers did not express any tensions in letting students "do their own thing". They offered support but allowed students to try out their own techniques. Students saw themselves less as apprentices and more as "autonomous decision makers" with support as enabling them "to experience problematic instruction" (Clift, Meng, & Eggerding, 1992, p. 40). Imitating the cooperating teacher was not commonplace.

Prior to revisions, university course work demands often competed with the desires of

practicum teachers, creating tension for practicum students and in some cases lead to a resistance and rejection of core concepts reflected in university courses. Program revisions tended to eliminate much of this resistance. The ownership/partnership dimension is reflected in student interview comments.

> She let me teach. She and I liked it. She observed me, took notes of what I did right, how to phrase things. She did this for me. She critiqued me.
>
> I gave my teacher copies of everything we did in classes and I said just seriously, just give me feedback. I couldn't have been doing it all right. Then she started giving me more (to do). I wanted to do my own thing, not her lessons.

This ownership/partnership was not without tension, however, especially for students.

> I decided how to teach it but I was influenced by my teacher. She corrected me during the lesson. I didn't like it. I told her I want to learn. Let me do it, and I will learn afterwards.

We were surprised at the degree to which teachers gave students free rein to make their own decisions while being there as a safety net when things didn't go smoothly. In the exit interviews teachers stated that they were willing to do this because they thought students were well prepared and knowledgeable and that students took a lot of initiative. Teachers frequently referred to the fact that they knew that they could depend on the practicum students.

Risk Taking

Students tried out and learned new strategies often not knowing how things would turn out or even if what they did was working. Students seemed to own their own problems and learn from planning that went well as well as from lessons that did not. The connected nature of the practicum allowed students to learn from unsuccessful experiences.

I am willing to fail. I know I don't know everything. She watched me teach. I think she liked it. The kids were excited.

I didn't group right for a lesson. I grouped high together, and low togethers and mixed did the best. Low ability didn't want to do it; no motivation. High ability read each other's reports; they were sneaky. I saw how you need to use mixed ability groups. It was a good experience. I would like to do it over again.

"Pam's" teacher stated in the interview that she learned that things went better when she let Pam teach in her own way. Pam expressed the situation this way:

She gave me a lot of suggestions but realized that it didn't work out the way she wanted me to teach so she just let me go. When she would give me feedback she would tell me when I should have stopped...when loosing children's attention. Maybe it was hard for her to watch me. I guess then she said to herself, I'll just let her figure it out for herself...like with the popcorn lesson, my first lesson, she didn't say not to do it but she said they've seen kernels before...then when it didn't work I was afraid to get up there again. She said where it went wrong but then I was discouraged. I thought it would be O.K...like the kids starting crunching their cups. I didn't think about that.

Planning, Teaching, and Learning

Student interviews indicate that the revised practicum and course work allowed them to catch sight of the relationships between planning, teaching and student knowledge growth. This is something that was not apparent to them in the one day a week practicum. The revised practicum allowed teacher education students to get to know children as individuals and the responsibility for planning instruction helped them move beyond their affective concerns for student and view them in terms of their learning.[6]

> I had my own group everyday for one month. I got to see them grow and learn things I said.
>
> The most important thing was that we were there four days a week and got to know the teacher, students, and school. The activities and curriculum were week long and I got to grade it.
>
> Four days a week was good. I had a relationship, a connection with the students. You get to know the students; their good and bad points. I knew those children after this experience.

Realities

Practicum students were in the second semester of their junior year. College years are time of personal as well as intellectual development (Perry, 1970, Kitchner & King, 1981). Students are working on understanding who they are as young adults and social and personal problems vie with course work in terms of attention and cognitive energy. An undergraduate teacher education program forces students to confront an added dimension...the beginning development of a

professional identity. Prior to the revision, this was a major source of tension for students and faculty. The revised second professional semester was designed to immerse students in professional roles but it was done with a great deal of support. For students this theme can best be described as a love/hate relationship, as reflected in the following comments.

> I got in the car Monday, early, I was up late Sunday night. Everyone was griping in the car. Work was always a complaint; being tired. What's due this week!
>
> All those specials at (school). The schedule was different every day.
>
> It was very demanding. I was taking 19 credits. I was torn between two worlds... wish I could have given it all.
>
> This practicum was overwhelming with course work. There was a chunk of time at the school all morning. I was a part time teacher and full time student. I was working on Fridays and quit.
>
> Getting up early and being far away was hard. It helped bring methods courses together. It gave you a chance to feel what it's really like.

Shared ordeal helped contribute to the difference between this experience (demanding as it was) and previous experiences. Students helped each other and saw the faculty sharing the context. Faculty modeled what we wanted student to internalize: Flexibility in means but not in goals. In the end students came to see the value of the experience.

> It was so much due; became overwhelming. It got confusing until the ride home when we would sort it out; what was due when.
>
> We couldn't have done this (practicum) without each other.
>
> It became overwhelming, but now feel I like it... I felt like I did student teaching. I'm not as nervous now about student teaching. I really, really enjoyed it.
>
> We hated it. We then liked, enjoyed it more than the grade. I don't care about the grade. Everything finally came together. We needed to get it done. Assessment was not testing.
>
> Goals [7] were realistic but it was a stretch.
>
> The stuff I had to plan, think about. So much work-so rewarding. Once you finish it you realize you did learn, like what we do with the kids. It hits you all of a sudden, just doing it, not like studying it and forgetting it.

Relationship of Changes to Larger Program Goals

As stated earlier, the program aims to broaden and deepen student's thinking about teaching and learning. Did these changes simply lead to greater technical proficiency of our students or did they also contribute to student ability to think critically about education? Certainly students learned about practical aspects.

> I learned that I prefer teaching smaller groups of students rather than the whole class. I like to guide students through an activity rather than push through. I pushed the students through the science lesson and am not pleased with the results. I was able to reteach the lesson to a couple of students at Martha's Table where I tutor and it went much better. I was able to give them more time to explore the materials and the process. During my lesson at Janney, I did not have the opportunity to (allow children to) explore.

> A few things I learned throughout this experience...yelling does not work; flexibility is an absolute MUST; each child has different strengths and weaknesses and has different needs to be met; teachers must find these individual needs and meet them; planning takes much time but is one of the most crucial parts to teaching; with children this young, creativity and many activities must constantly be flowing; and I believe children of all ages learn best by "doing" and working cooperatively.

> Previously, I felt like the secret to being a good teacher was a big mystery. I was unsure about everything-discipline, classroom management, whole language issues, developmentally appropriate practices. Now I have more opinions and ideas of my own based on what I've read, seen and experienced first hand.

> I learned so many things about teaching during this practicum, largely due to our period of consecutive days in the classroom. Effective teaching is not spitting out information from a textbook-kids get so bored with that, and that leads to management problems. Effective teaching takes a lot of preparation, and a lot of foresight. Effective teachers don't treat the class as a static unit; they treat the class as a colorful group of individuals who have very different learning needs and backgrounds.

Student responses also indicated that what they were learning was not just a set of teaching techniques, but a philosophy.

> I am slowly deciding on who I am as a teacher and who I am not. I am not the worksheet drilling disciplinarian across the hall, even though I do admire the quiet in her classroom at times. I am also not a warm-fuzzy teacher. I think learning

should be fun, but having fun is not a good enough objective.

> I wanted to discover what my philosophy of education is. In each school that I go to, I learn something different about myself and the way I believe children learn best....Children need to be involved in their learning. Therefore, effective lessons are when the students are actively involved in the lesson. Lessons in which students received direct instruction were not as successful....I feel that the Socratic method is crucial in teaching...As teachers our goal should be to get the children to think and problem solve...However, the most important thing for a teacher to do is to give each child a sense of worth.

Students learned from bad experiences as well as from good. In one classroom, the teacher reflected the wholistic instruction of the CUA program but had trouble with classroom management. Two students were teamed in this classroom and coped with the problem in different ways. Working in a classroom with poor management and organization was particularly difficult for one of these students, but the experience enabled her to focus on her own weaknesses.

> First, and foremost, I learned the importance of classroom management and the teachers role in this. I learned from hands on experience that as a teacher I will need to set rules and make students aware of these rules, and then stay on my toes to enforce these rules. I want to have respect in my classroom and I saw that will not happen in an un-managed classroom. The other thing I learned is the importance of being organized. With so many things going on that will be going on, it will be so important to be organized. I learned to be organized in what I want to teach, how I want to teach it and what I will expect from the students. If for no other reason I realized it is important for my own sanity. I think that the thing I learned in this field experience will be very valuable to me later when I have my own classroom. I realize that not every class will be misbehaved as this class was, but maybe they will. What I learned is that no matter what type a class I have, I will be the teacher and thus set the tone for the class.

Conclusions

Student teaching is, in a way, a final test. As such, it brings tensions for students and cooperating teachers alike. In discussing why teachers in her school were so willing to turn over instruction to these junior year students, the principal of the public school felt that the fact that this was not the final stage in the teacher education students' preparation was a big factor. Unlike student teachers, junior year students did not have to worry about the total curriculum and could focus attention on a small part of the total picture. Lortie (1975) states that in most professions, in

formal apprenticeships a "neophyte is ushered through a series of tasks of ascending difficulty and assumes greater responsibility as his technical competence increases...The circumstances of the beginning teacher differ...Tasks are not added sequentially to allow for gradual increase in skill and knowledge; the beginner learns while performing the full complement of teaching duties" (p. 72).

The revision undertaken during the junior year provided teacher education students with a scaffolded experience which it often missing in teacher education programs. They experienced, and owned, an authentic teaching experience but many of the task demands were under control (or shared) with the cooperating teacher. In addition, university course work supported the planning of instruction. This guided assistance allowed teacher education students to became part of two communities of learning, support, and guided assessment; 1) a community of co-explorers with their cooperating teachers (Oja, Diller, Corcoran & Andrew, 1992) and 2) a community of cohort collegiality scaffolded by university faculty.

Zeichner (1990) describes two competing conceptions of teaching practice. One conception holds that preparation for practice should focus on research knowledge to inform teaching and learning. In the other, the focus should be on helping students become aware of the political and social reproductive nature of schooling. While Zeichner argues for an overlapping view, his suggestions pose the dilemma of where to focus limited resources within a teacher education program. By this we mean a finite number of courses and field experiences. We maintain that some level of technical or procedural proficiency is necessary if teacher education students are to be in a position to think critically. This is supported by data we are beginning to collect (Taylor & Valli, 1992). What is important for our program is 1) that graduates enter the field with adequate procedural proficiency and 2) that they are exposed to an inquiry orientation that allows them to think critically about the nature and purpose of schooling and issues related to teaching and learning. We suggest that curriculum planning may be an arena of overlap. Our first year effort at this junior year revision was much like first year teaching. We were trying to survive. Unlike

many first year teachers we knew where we wanted to go, but like first year teachers we weren't exactly sure how it was all going to play out. A lot of attention was focused on keeping things running, negotiating our course work requirements with the reality of the practicum without compromising our goals. Flexibility became a key term for all of us. Our students were trying to survive with us. This created a special comradery that was unique to this first year and may have inflated students' opinions of the experience.

The revised practicum brought us all to a new dimension of thinking critically about teacher education preparation. In the second go-round, which we have just completed, we have become more aware of the way curriculum planning itself can be a forum for helping students think broadly and deeply about teaching and learning and to move beyond concerns with their own performance. This second go round occurred in the fall semester, and many units were to go into place around November. American Indians, whether linked to Thanksgiving in the primary grades or the study of the early settlement of America in the upper grades tended to be favored themes. These curriculum topics proved to be fertile grounds for examining issues of stereotypical conceptions as well as critical questions about what should be taught to children. Implementing thematic units not only enabled students to use the theories they had acquired from their education courses but allowed faculty to observe and talk about students' misconceptions in planning and to share in students' reflections of teaching in context.

We gained the support from our education department in implementing this experience and are grateful that they recognize the importance of the practicum in enhancing the quality of our teacher education program. We are conducting follow-up research to examine the long-term effects of the revised practicum on the student teaching experience and beyond.

References

Clift R., Meng, L. & Eggerding, S. (1992). Mixed messages in learning to teach English. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association. San Francisco, CA.

Erdman, J. (1983). Assessing the purposes of early field experience programs. Journal of Teacher Education, 34, (4), 27-31.

Feiman-Nemser, S. & Buchmann, M. (1985). Pitfalls of experience in teacher preparation, Teachers College Record, 87, 1, 53-65.

Gardner, H. (1991). The unschooled mind: How children think and how schools should teach. Basic Books.

Goodman, J. (1988). Constructing a practical philosophy of teaching: A study of preservice teachers' professional perspectives. Teaching and Teacher Education, 4, 121-137.

Jacobs, H. (1989). The interdisciplinary concept model: A step by stem approach for developing integrated units of study. In H. Jacobs, (Ed.) Interdisciplinary curriculum design and implementation. (pp. 55-65). Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development: Alexandria, VA.

Kitchner, K. & King, P (1981). Reflective judgement concepts of justification and their relationship to age and education. Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 2, 89-116.

Lortie, D. (1975). Schoolteacher, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Newman, D., Griffin, P., & Cole, M. (1989). The construction zone: Working for cognitive change. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Oja, S. N., Diller, A. E., & Andrew, M. D. (1992). Communities of inquiry, communities of support: The five-year program at the University of New Hampshire. In L. Valli (Ed.), Reflective teacher education: Cases and critiques. (pp. 3-23). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Perry, W. (1970). Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years: A scheme. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Raths, J. (1987). Enhancing understanding through debriefing. Educational Leadership, 45, (2), 24-27.

Schwab R., Jackson, S. & Schuler, R. (1986). Educator burnout: Sources and consequences. Education Research Quarterly, 10, (3), 14-30.

Taylor, N.E. & Valli, L. (1992). Refining the meaning of reflection in education through program evaluation. Teacher Education Quarterly, 33-47

Valli, L. (1990). Moral approaches to reflective practice. In R. Clift, W, Huston, & M. Pugach, (Eds.) Encouraging reflective practice in education: An analysis of issues and programs. New York: Teachers College Press.

Valli, L. & Taylor, N.E. (1987). Reflective teacher education: Preferred characteristics for a content and process model. In H. Waxman, J. Freiberg, J. Vaughn & M. Weil (Eds.), Images of reflection in teacher education. Reston, VA. Association of Teacher Educators.

Vygotsky, L. (1981). The genesis of higher mental functions. In J.Wertsch (Ed.), The concept of activity in Soviet psychology. New York: M.S. Sharpe.

Zeichner, K. (1990). Changing directions in the practicum: looking ahead to the 1990's. Journal of Education for Teaching. 16, 2, 105-132.

Figure 1

First Professional Semester:

Introduction to Curriculum and Schools

Classroom Management

(Three Arts & Sciences distribution courses)

Practicum: One full day a week in one school (the purpose is to develop a picture of a school day, begin to understand the multifaceted job of a teacher, move from observer to assistant, and finally to plan some individual lessons assigned by the teacher.)

Second Professional Semester:

Social Studies and Science Methods

Reading and Language Arts

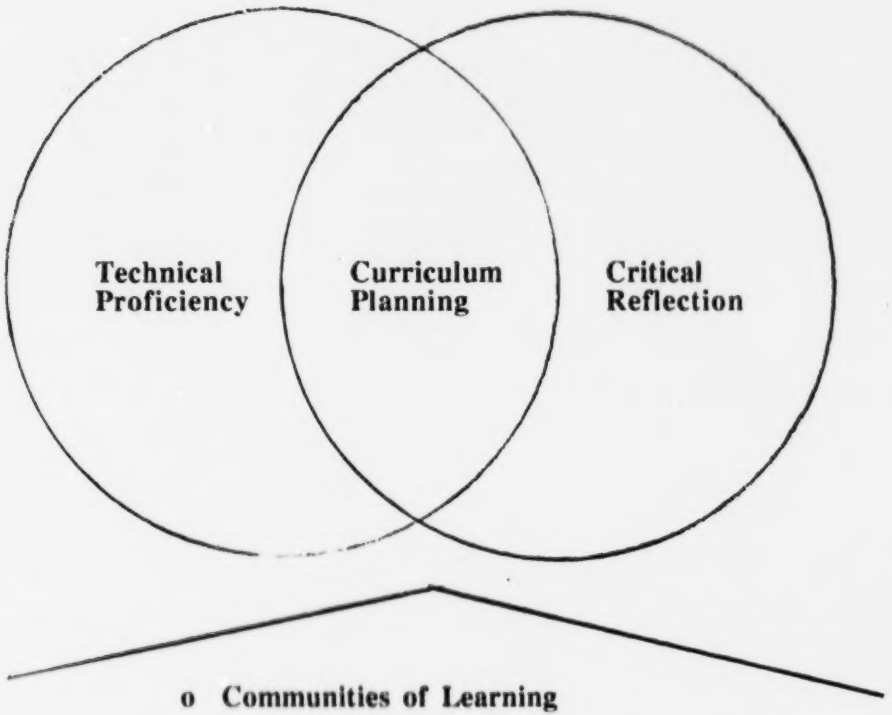
Math Methods

Children's Literature

(One Arts & Sciences distribution course)

Practicum: Two half days the first part of the semester, four half days in the second part of the semester. Purpose is to develop an understanding of curricular planning and of the relationship between curriculum planning teaching and learning.

Figure 2



- Communities of Learning
- Situated Learning
  - co-explorers with cooperating teachers
  - cohort collegiality with scaffolding by university faculty

1. Quality of thinking refers to the ability to view a situation from multiple perspectives rather than take an absolute viewpoint. Scope refers to the content of one's thinking. In our program, one goal is to move students beyond preoccupation with technical aspects of teaching and learning and toward consideration of the social, political and ethical principles underlying teaching.

2. The problems and much of the planning for change occurred when Carol Livingston coordinated the elementary education program. Dr. Livingston chose to leave the University after changes had been planned. Dr. Samaras "inherited" these plans and added the strong cooperative learning element in unit planning. We are grateful to Dr. Livingston for her insight and insistence that field experiences must contribute to, not distract from, program goals. We are also grateful that she continues to be interested in these efforts and provides time to both critique and encourage our efforts.

3. The university is located in the nation's capitol and provides many national as well as local resources. Resources that were integrated with unit planning included: The National Science Resources Center, National Geographic Society, The American History Museum, The National Museum of African Art, The Air & Space Museum, The National Zoo, The National Archives, The Department of Education, as well as national professional organizations including The National Science Teachers Association and The National Council for the Social Studies.

4. We would like to thank Barbara Kelly, principal of St. Ann's Academy and the District of Columbia Public School System for their cooperation.

   Both schools are located in an affluent area of the city but are quite different in terms of the type of students enrolled and approach to education. The public school has approximately 400 students most of whom live in the neighborhood. Children from nearby embassies attend and give the school and international flavor. Racial breakdown is as follows: [75 % White, 13% Black, 8% Hispanic and 4% Asian] Progressive educational methods are used in the school and for the past three years the school has used multi-aged groupings in its primary grades. This school is a lively, bustling place. A lot of activity goes on inside and outside the classrooms. The hall ways are brightly lined with children's art work and students frequently use the halls for project work. The Catholic school is adjacent to the public school. It enrolls approximately 200 students in grades 1-8 from all parts of the city. [Racial breakdown: 35% White, 50% Black, 12% Hispanic and 3% Asian] The elementary grades are housed in a new addition to the original school which is connected to the Chapel. Since the school does not have a playground, the public school arranges their schedule so that students from the Catholic school can share the outdoor area. The principal is trying to move the school toward a more wholistic and meaning centered approach to education but at the moment the teaching is quite traditional. The school is a quiet place. When students are in the halls they usually move as a class. First and second graders place their finger to their lips to remind themselves to be quiet. In the classroom, students sit in orderly rows. While instruction is traditional, many activities go on in the school to promote students sense of self worth. For example faculty and staff serve as mentors to a cross age group of students and students have lunch with their mentors once a month.

5. See Valli, L. (1992). Beginning teacher problems: Areas for teacher education improvement. Action in Teacher Education, 24, (1), 18-25 for a discussion of these problems.

6. Beginning teacher education students tend to describe effective teachers by emphasizing interpersonal/affective variables and downplaying academic dimensions of teaching. See

Weinstein, C. S. (1989). Teacher education students' preconceptions of teaching. Journal of Teacher Education, 40, (2), 53-60 for a discussion of this as a developmental progression.

7. The following statement of goals for the revised practicum were presented to students during the exit interviews: A. Provided students with a coherent experience that will allow them to see the curriculum in action, the way learning experiences build upon learning experiences. B. Give students opportunity to design and carry out a sequence of instruction. C. Give students an opportunity to learn instructional techniques from cooperating teachers and try out practices advocated in course work.